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ABSTRACT

This report is one in a series dealing with Swedish adolescents' uses of video based upon the Media Panel research program, a three-wave, longitudinal research program on video use conducted at the Department of Sociology, the University of Lund, and the Department for Information Techniques, the University College of Vaxjo, Sweden. Data were gathered in 1982 through in-depth interviews with 46 ninth grade subjects from Vaxjo, who had earlier indicated that they used video in questionnaire surveys in December 1980 and March 1981. Following an introduction and an explanation of the data sources and background data, findings on adolescents' uses of video are discussed under the topics of video, television, and cinema; the respondents' attitudes toward conventional television; video and the cinema; video viewing (when, with whom, what, and why); horror and violence films; and differences between the sexes. Also included are discussions of the reported effects of video viewing on adolescents, and video use as a development of popular culture. Quotations excerpted from the interviews illustrate various points. Thirty-one references are listed. (LMM)

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The Uses and Effects of Video Viewing Among Swedish Adolescents.

An Ethnographic Study of Adolescent Video Users.

media panel

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Report No 31
December 1983

Keith Roe
Karin Salomonsson

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THIS IS THE FOURTH, AND LAST, REPORT IN A SERIES DEALING WITH SWEDISH ADOLESCENTS' USES OF VIDEO BASED UPON THE MEDIA PANEL RESEARCH PROGRAM. THE PRESENT REPORT THEREFORE BUILDS UPON THE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE PREVIOUS THREE. THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION PERTAINING TO THESE PREVIOUS REPORTS IS PRESENTED BELOW. EACH OF THEM MAY BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING THE ADDRESS AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE.

1. Roe, K (1981) 'Video and Youth: New Patterns of Media Use'. Media Panel Report No 18. Lund: University of Lund, Dept of Sociology (mimeo).

2. Roe, K (1983) 'The Influence of Video Technology in Adolescence'. Media Panel Report No 27. Paper presented to an Invited Paper Plenary Session of the Conference 'Audiovisual Communication and Mental Health' sponsored by the Finnish Association for Mental Health in Helsinki 12-15 June, 1983.

3. Roe, K (1983)'Swedish Adolescents and their Relation to Video'. Media Panel Report No 28. Lund: University of Lund, Dept of Sociology (mimeo). (English translation) Original Swedish version in Norås, T (red) Mediekunskap: Barn og Billedmedier. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984.

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FOREWORD: THE MEDIA PANEL PROGRAM

The Media Panel is a research program conducted at the Department of Sociology, The University of Lund, and The Department for Information Techniques, The University College of Växjö. It is based on two research panels, one panel originally consisting of nursery school children and their parents, and the other of primary school children and their parents. The research program is described in Rosengren and Windahl (1978). The aim of the panels is to analyze adolescents' TV behaviour and relations.

THE PANELS

The primary school panel is based in Växjö, a town of 65,000 inhabitants situated in Southern Sweden. The population of the Växjö panel consists of adolescents from eleven to fifteen years of age. The study had a planned time span of four years: three research waves, with two years interval. All three waves have now been collected. One of the reasons for this design - and, indeed, for the whole research program, is that mass media research has for the most part had the character of ad.hoc research, whereas longitudinal and cumulative studies have been rarer. The Media Panel Program is an attempt to redress this shortcoming.

The nursery school panel is based in the city of Malmö in South West Sweden, with 240,000 inhabitants. The population of the Malmö panel consists of children from six to ten years of age and is under the direction of Inga Sonesson (see Rosengren and Windahl, 1978, p 8). It shares with the Växjö panel, the planned time span of four years, three research waves at two years interval.

For both panels, self-administered questionnaires were presented in the classroom to both populations in December 1980 and March 1981, thus completing the data collection stage of the third research wave. The latter questionnaire contained questions on video use and for the Växjö panel also on attitude to school. In addition the pupils contemporaneous school marks were collected in all subjects.

It is now planned, under the auspices of Skolöverstyrelsen, to continue the research by new data collections in Växjö and Malmö during 1983 and 1984.

1. INTRODUCTION

> "The communications revolution is not the only symptom of profound change as we experience ourselves being thrust into a new century. We also seem to be at a point of economic, social, and value transitions. We are in some type of major shift, a discontinuity of change. We are on the cusp of something big ... The communications revolution is occurring simultaneously with these forces of change. It is not a cause nor an effect, but an intensifier or catalyst." (Williams 1982, pp 21-24)

The 'communications revolution' may not be 'cause or effect' in terms of the contemporary forces of social change but it is undoubtedly the most visible. Just when we had begun to feel comfortable in the known-world of direct broadcast television, video arrived to disconcert us. As a result we have lost our poise, our security in the familiar. What is worse we are daily told that this is only the beginning, that many more innovations and changes in communications technology, some much more far-reaching in their potential effects than video, are waiting on the threshold. A new literature of future developments in media is already available (see e.g. Haigh et al 1981, Roe 1981, Moorfoot 1982, Williams 1982).

What is often lost amidst the hectic discourse of change is the sense of continuity. It is always easy to be carried away by the rhetoric of so-called revolutions so that one fails to see that what is actually occurring is merely that old forms are being given new expression. As Roe (1981) has pointed out, for example, video seen historically is merely one step further along the continuum of greater user choice and control in the visual media, a step already long achieved in the aural media. Similarly Roe (1983b) has maintained that much of the oft-discussed content of video faithfully follows an old tradition of young male popular culture, and is not of itself anything new.

The awareness of change therefore needs to be balanced by the awareness of continuity. The problem is that change is much more visible and startling than the continuities we are all accustomed to. Also, and this is perhaps especially true of academic research, traditions and behaviours which lie outside the ken of the dominant culture of a period only become visible during periods of dramatic change with the result that <u>it is easy to mistake visibility for creation.</u> It does not matter that, for example, countless generations of young adolescent boys have secretly looked at pornography and have been attracted by violent comics, books and films. What matters is that they are suddenly and glaringly <u>seen</u> to be doing it - by an outraged public opinion.

In this situation the perceptions and attitudes of the user become of greater importance. For the pubescent boy the difference between a pornographic magazine and a pornographic video film may be relatively small and his reaction to the latter is likely to be tempered accordingly. In comparison the adult who has not seen any pornography at all for 20 or 30 years, and who in any event has little interest in it, is liable to experience a shock when confronted by a pornographic video film.

This is not to argue that technological changes like video are insignificant. Video makes favoured contents more accessible, more direct. It increases user choice, control and autonomy and correspondingly makes censorship and control over content much more difficult. It forces us to re-think accepted norms and policies. All of this is important and has significant social implications. However, we need to maintain a sense of proportion, of historical and cultural perspective, in dealing with changes in the media of communication if we are to avoid the stereotyped debates and hysteria which characterized the arrival of video (see Roe 1984).

It is therefore important to discover the perspective of the user. To find out the uses which the adolescent audience has for video and, if possible, to examine from this perspective what the effects of video viewing are. It was this motivation which lay behind the present work. The desire to hear what adolescents themselves, as one of the audiences most cited in public debates, had to say about video and video viewing. To this end the authors have interviewed over 50 teenagers. The results of these interviews will be discussed in sections 3 and 4. Section 2 will deal with the data sources and the empirical background of the study.

What is Video?

Before we proceed it would be well briefly to examine exactly what is meant by 'video' since the term is often used for a range of different machines, functions and contents. According to Moorcroft (1982) video,

> "is the generic term for video cassettes and video discs used in education, in industry and in the home, together with the term 'videogram' to describe programmes distributed on cassettes and discs. Videograms are distributed physically like books and records, free of government regulation and controls, unlike broadcasting, satellite and cable television which have to share 'scarce' technical resources like frequencies. Moreover consumers are free to play whatever programme they please, when they want." (p 22)

An important difference to bear in mind for future video development is the difference between video-cassette machines and video-disc players. Video-cassette machines have two functions: "recording programmes from the television set or from an electronic camera for home movies, and playing back such material on purchased prerecorded cassettes." (ibid p 23). Video-disc players are very new on the market and some systems are still at the development stage. Basically video discs are of two kinds: optical and mechanical. The optical systems use a laser to modulate light on discs spinning fifty times faster than an audio LP. The mechanical system is, in effect, the extension of the audio record player, by increasing the speed twenty-five times to include the picture as well as the sound. Players of either video disc system can only play back, they cannot record (Moorfoot 1982, p 24). The question of whether cassettes or discs will predominate in the future has not yet been determined and depends on a range of factors. At the present time, however, the cassette systems would appear to have built up a commanding lead.

The Swedish Video Market

The market take-off year for video-cassette machines in Sweden was 1981. During that single year the number of machines in the country doubled. In 1982 net sales reached 150,000. The prognosis of the trade itself for 1983 is net sales of 110,000. This will bring the total number of machines to over half a million (in a country of some 8 millions). While the half-million prognosis is likely to be met (giving a total of 15-16 % of all households) the introduction of a tax on video equipment by the Swedish Government in 1983 has caused a fall in sales and a corresponding reduction in medium and long-range forecasts.

Video-disc machines only arrived on the Swedish market in 1983. The sales prognosis for 1983 is approximately 10,000 machines.

The above information is taken from the University of Gothenburg, Department of Business administration and is based on the trade associations' own estimates.

The growth in the video market has meant that the percentage of the population with direct access to a video-cassette machine has increased markedly. In 1981 5 % of households possessed a machine although the percentage was much higher in families with young children. By the spring of 1982 the percentage had increased to 11 % and is now over 15 %. Families

with children and teenagers, especially in larger towns and cities continue to be over represented in this figure. According to Swedish television's audience research department young men under 24 living in big cities have the highest ratio of video possession (25 %), (see Filipson and Schyller 1982).

2. EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Data Sources

The data for this report are taken from the third wave of the Växjö panel of the Media Panel Program (see Foreword). In March 1981 as part of the final data collection of the original program the respondents completed self administered questionnaires which included questions on video use. This video data has been fully discussed in previous media panel reports (Roe 1981, Flodin, Hedinsson and Roe 1982).

In 1982 it was decided to follow up of those respondents who had been in the 7th grade in 1980-81 who had replied that they tended to watch video. These adolescents by this time attended the 9th class of the compulsory school and were approximately 15 years of age. Of the 262 7th grade respondents 91 had replied that they tended to watch video and had given information on what they viewed. Of these 47 were boys and 44 were girls. These were contacted by post in the autumn of 1982 (see appendix 1). At the same time a letter was sent to their parents explaining the background of the reserach (see appendix 2). Ten letters were directly returned by the postal authorities since the respondents no longer lived in the area. 76 of the remainder were contacted by telephone some days later (the remaining 5 being uncontactable by telephone). They were asked if they were willing,in a group of peers during school time,to be interviewed, about their mass media use. No specific mention was made of video. The permission of the school authorities had already been obtained previously (see appendix 3). Of the 76, 50 agreed to be interviewed although in the event, because of absence or problems of communication in the schools, 46 were actually present at the interviews, 23 boys and 23 girls. The interviews were taped and undertaken in 8 sex-based groups of 5-7 members. The four boys groups were interviewed by Keith Roe, the four girls groups by Karin Salomonsson. The groups were arranged for each school separately and wherever possible pupils from the same class were interviewed in the same group. Most groups contained individuals from at least 2-3 classes. Interview

length lasted from ½ hour to 1½ hours depending on the communicativeness of the group. When typed out the interview transcripts amounted to over 300 pages. In addition two pilot interviews with slightly older adolescents were conducted. The respondents for these were approximately 17 years of age. One group consisted of females attending high school in Helsingborg, a port of some 100,000 inhabitants. The other group was composed of males attending high school in Lund, a university city of some 75,000 inhabitants. Responses from these interviews will occasionally be cited where they illustrate important points.

A guideline interview schema was drawn up to facilitate discussion although it was decided, within the grounds of relevance, to allow the maximum of flexibility in order to allow the respondents as much initiative as possible.

2.2. Background Data

The general social characteristics of the Växjö panel and its media uses and relations have been dealt with in a number of previous reports (Hedinsson and Johnsson-Smaragdi 1978, Johnsson-Smaragdi 1981, Hedinsson 1981, Flodin, Hedinsson and Roe 1982). The video use of the third wave respondents has been dealt with in Roe (1981, 1983b,c). A discussion of the third wave 9th grade respondents' video relationships has been presented by Roe (1983a).

In the latter work a statistical analysis of variance (ANOVA) and a multiple classification analysis (MCA) showed that for the 9th grade respondents video viewing was only weakly associated with home background (as measured by a compound index of both parents' educational background and current employment). The tendency was for lower SES-education background adolescents to be more likely to watch video than higher SES-education background adolescents. On the other hand there was found to be absolutely no relationship between respondents' sex and video viewing.

In addition the ANOVA and MCA analyses showed that school achievement and an orientation to peers (as opposed to parents) were also related to video viewing. Low school achievers and the more peer oriented both reported more often that they tended to watch video. In general then, the results of these analyses confirm the earlier, preliminary, analysis of Roe (1981) which suggested that it was low achieving, peer oriented adolescents who were most likely to be watching video.

The 46 video interviewees dealt with in this report reflected, in the

main, these findings. There was a slight tendency for the video viewers interviewed to be of a lower SES background than the respondents from that school year as a whole. Similarly their average marks in eight school subjects were below those of the average for the whole year. On the other hand the group of video interviewees were not any more or less peer oriented than their contemporaries. This is in contrast to the findings cited above. In all probability the explanation is to be found in the developmental nature of the move from parent orientation to that of peers. This move does not really begin to take effect until after the age of 13 and is not fully evidenced until 15 years of age (see Roe 1983a). In the results cited above we are dealing with 15 year olds whereas the video interviewees were only 13 when measured on this scale.

Roe (1981) reported that video viewers in Växjö tended also to be above average TV viewers (although there were important subgroup exceptions in that, for example, those who watched violence and horror films were exceptionally low TV users). The group of video interviewees was therefore analyzed according to their weekly TV use. The results confirmed those of the previous report. As a group the video interviewees watched on average substantially more TV than their contemporaries (this being especially so for the boys) suggesting that more habitual TV use predisposes one to be more likely to employ video. Strangely enough, as we shall see, the video interviewees, while apparently watching large amounts of TV, were almost universally and forcibly very critical of TV's output. This suggests that their TV use was a matter of habit rather than enjoyment. Indeed TV's poor output was often cited as a motivation for viewing video. We should conclude in the light of all this that the relationship between TV use and video viewing is by no means as straightforward as the overall statistical aggregates tend to suggest. What may be true for 'average' and 'casual' video users may not hold at all for subgroups of 'heavy' video users, especially those preferring violent and horrific contents. Future research would do well to heed this phenomenon and attack both levels of analysis if misleading generalizations are to be avoided.

3. ADOLESCENTS' USES OF VIDEO

It is intended to employ the interviews with adolescents in order to present a profile of Swedish youths' uses of video. In this way we shall better be able to contextualize the place which video has in the lives of these young people. To see it in relation to other media, family, school, peer relations,

leisure activities and opportunities, relations between the sexes etc. It is only within the context of everyday life that the role and significance of video may genuinely be understood.

3.1. Video, Television, Cinema

It is clear that one's receptiveness and attitude towards a new medium will to a large extent be influenced by the range and nature of existing alternatives and the relative advantages in various aspects of use which each offers. Roe (1981) has explored the development of successive new electronic media and their effects upon existing media and has indicated the importance of the degree of choice and control over the place, conditions, time and content offered by the electronic media. It was concluded that video offers users a substantial increase in the degree of choice and control in comparison with existing media. With video it is possible (in juxtaposition to the cinema or even television) to have far greater influence over when, where, what and with whom to view. It enables the user to control more effectively each of these aspects. Video's relative advantages in these respects indicate a degree of 'pull' towards the use of the medium from existing media. This is not the whole story, however. The interviews revealed a strong element of 'push' as well. A 'push' away from television and the cinema (the two nearest 'rivals' to video in the media spectrum). It is the evidence for this 'push' which we shall present in this section.

3.1.1. The Respondents' Attitude to Conventional Television

While we anticipated a fair amount of criticism of Swedish television's bill of fare we were unprepared for the violence and universality of its disapprobation among the respondents. We anticipated criticism, firstly because it is known from empirical studies (e.g. Flodin et al 1982) that television viewing reaches a life-time low during the years of mid adolescence. For various reasons to do with physical maturation, peer group involvement, pop music interest etc TV declines very markedly as an interest in these years. Ceteris paribus therefore we should expect 15-17 year olds to be less enthusiastic about TV than most other segments of the population. Also, it should be noted. TV offers comparatively little to this age group. Television is a medium dominated by adults, adult concerns and adult interests. Where sending time and resources are devoted to the young they tend to be concen-

trated most on children's programmes, rather than on teenager's. Finally it should be noted that our respondents, in one important sense, constituted a self-selected group in that they all had embraced video as a medium rather early in its history and to varying degrees had explored its various uses.

Thus from the nature of the age group, the nature of television content and the specific characteristics of the groups interviewed, a critical attitude to television was anticipated. As can be seen from the comments cited below we did indeed meet such an attitude but at uncommonly strong levels. While the comments quoted themselves give something of this flavour they cannot give an indication of the vehemence with which they were expressed.

One group of boys curtly summed up their attitude to Swedish television thus,

I: "What do you think of Swedish TV?"
- "Shit!"
- "Rubbish!"
- "Crap. Rubbish!"
- "It's bad."
- "But, sometimes they have good programmes."
- "Yeah but not very often."

Another group expressed their views in similar terms,

I: "What do you think of Swedish TV?"
- "Hopeless."
- "Bad."
- "Its the absolute bottom."
- "Bad."
- "You'd have to search for worse TV!"

Specific criticism against content was levelled most especially against 'debate and interview' type programmes and other programmes which were seen as mostly of the 'talking head' type. While some respondents voiced the usual calls for more entertainment programmes and more full length feature films and sport these were far from the only alternatives offered. Indeed we were surprised by the range and sophistication which some groups manifested in

discussions of alternative programming. Even with sport which, predictably, many of the boys called for, it was far from 'more of the same' which was demanded. Quite the opposite, criticism of the dominance of football and ice-hockey was voiced along with calls for far more minority sports such as basketball, Rugby and handball. In this we see one of the weaknesses of television as a 'broad' casting medium which must aim at the most wide-ranging tastes and audience segments and which therefore has little time for minority tastes and interests. We may add in parenthesis that it is precisely here, in the agglomeration of minority interests in films, sports etc, that video found one of its earliest niches.

Critics of popular culture in general and its mass mediated forms in particular often point to the 'lowest common denomenator' hypothesis as an explanation for the banality and similarity of much TV fare. The responsibility for this is usually laid at the philistine tastes of the 'mass audience' which force programme makers to present the contents they do. This ignores the conditioning influence of the medium itself. Perhaps television like all broadcast national media represents a general compromise which in fact satisfies very few, and that hidden in the general aggregates of the TV audience are a myriad of taste publics which are only partially and imperfectly satisfied by television output. We may be reminded of the fragmentation of the radio audience once the demand for 'broad' casting was removed from the medium of radio by the advent of television. The video revolution (including video records) gives us the same potential in the visual media to cater for minority audience segments and to be freed from the constraints of central 'common denominator' broadcasting programming policies. It could be countered that large parts of the audience express various degrees of satisfaction with their TV fare. However much this may be the case we cannot assume from this that they would continue to do so given a far greater range of alternatives. To paraphrase the March Hare in Alice's Wonderland, "I like what I get", but that is not the same as "I get what I like."

In one group of 17 year olds (boys) the interviewees were asked how, since they were so critical of television, they would themselves improve TV programming. The resultant discussion was illustrative of the nuanced and rather sophisticated nature of the TV public (at least its younger portions). The TV public is often accused of merely wanting more of the same, more entertainment, more 'Dallas' type soap operas. This the producers tell us is what the 'Public' wants. We found little evidence for the existence

of this mythical public, instead we found support for the March Hare - people are not getting what they like.

I: "How would you improve TV?"
- "First of all I'd kick out 'Dallas'."
- "More films."
- "More sport."
- "We could do with another channel I think."
- "Two."
- "... and then I think they could do a lot of other things - really good wildlife programmes like Costeau's underwater world. That's the sort of thing everybody can watch. Dead interesting."
- "Yeah, it can be fun to watch that."
- "Yeah, there was this other series where some bloke travelled all over the world and showed different parts of the world and the wild life and everything."
- "Scientific films are good too."
- "Lots of science, yes, that's cool too. Interesting."
- "Technical."
- "Yes you learn from that too."
- "Yes of course."
- "Instead all we've got is 'technical magazine' once a month."
- "Yeah, hell! once a month. It's not enough."
- "Yeah, and I think they could have more consumer programmes. Take up things."

I : "They do that about 5 minutes a week don't they?"
- '.. Yeah, that programme should be two hours ... because there is so much shit in the shops."

...

I: "Yes, they could take the 10 most cold cars in Sweden ... and test them."
- "Yeah, things like that are interesting."
- "Tests, that everyone is interested in."

I: "But you get that in the magazines, those motor magazines. Does TV really need to do that?"
- "Yeah, for christs sake. Then you would have to go out and buy all the motor magazines and that. You wouldn't be able to afford anything else if you did."

- "Yeah, if it was on TV more people would watch it, discuss it."
- "They could have programmes on how to repair a car."
- "Yes, instead they have these long meaningless discussions on TV."
- "Yes, exactly, loads of that, it's completely unimportant. No-one's interested. You just get depressed by it. All these debates. They're useless."
- "There is just too much politics I think. OK it's needed, but they should come to some result as well."
- "They just talk ..."

We have quoted this discussion at length because we believe that it reveals some very important points in the media debate and partly explains why a segment of the audience has embraced video. Firstly the public, on this evidence, most certainly does not want only more soap operas, entertainment etc. This group indicated a whole range of topics undervalued by TV programme makers. We are then led to ask ourselves how much time is devoted to nature, scientific, consumer and technical programmes in comparison to, say, theatre, high brow documentaries and other programmes of high cultural interest? We do not have such figures to hand but we suspect that Swedish TV content reflects, disproportionately, the tastes of an educated cultural/political elite with a sprinkling of entertainment, soap operas and popular films. It is partly against this background that the attraction of video vis à vis television for various social groups should be viewed. What I see on video is decided by me within the constraints of the market for pre-recorded cassettes (a market which is becoming increasingly diversified and sophisticated after a preliminary period of dominance by pornography and violent-horror films). What I see on TV (and when) is decided for me by producers who may or may not (in all probability, given the range of human interests, the latter) share my interests and concerns, let alone my weekly time budget.

3.1.2. Video and the Cinema

While television was almost universally disliked by our respondents, the cinema, in contrast, was reported as being a rather desirable media option. Indeed, many reported that they preferred going to the cinema to watching video. Why then has the arrival of video even further threatened a medium which was already long into decline in terms of the number of yearly ad-

missions? For our teenage respondents the answer was a simple one, 'cost'. While a popular activity, cinema going was seen as too expensive an alternative. There can be little doubt that the steadily increasing costs of cinema admission have ruled out a large potential audience for whom cinema going is a valued activity. In comparison, if one is a member of a group of 5 or 6 friends, a video film can be hired for a much lower cost per person (as much as a quarter or one-fifth of the price of a cinema ticket). In this case we see clearly that the shift to video vis à vis the cinema is a clear 'push' phenomenon from the valued, but expensive, cinema to the cheap but 'second best' video. In an earlier report Roe (1983c) suggested that with a little imagination the cinema could win back some of its lost teenage audience by, for example, offering group rebates and/or cheaper entrance for under 18's on various evenings. If we are serious about our concern for video violence and about attempts to create counter-attractions such a policy might even be subsidized by the state via taxation, for example from the proceeds of the new video tax. Certainly this would be preferable to merely increasing the costs of video viewing, a policy which would simply mean that some adolescents would not be able to afford to go to the cinema or be able to watch video. The result of this would simply be to create adolescent prey for the temptations of some (other) form of socially undesirable activity.

A further problem with regard to cinema going is related to the question of censorship, age limits and film cutting. Swedish film censorship for children under 15 viewed in an international context can be rather strict in some respects with regard to violent and horrific scenes. This means that many films which are available for viewing on video are certificated as unsuitable for cinema presentation for this age group. The adolescents interviewed were quite aware of this fact,

- "That film 'Rabid' when they were out on a motor bike."
- "Yes, but there you didn't see anything."
- "Then I must have seen it on video."
- "Yes, you didn't see any of it at the cinema."

Another respondent stated explicitly,

- "On video films you see these things but not at the cinema. You see how everything explodes and there are only bits left and blood pumping

out. You see things like that on video but not at the cinema."

Obviously, it can be argued, perhaps with justification, that such scenes should indeed be censored. The problem is that censorship, like all regulation, presumes that the measures are effective in what they set out to achieve. In the video age where pirate copying and illegal importation present few insurmountable problems it is clear that cinema censorship may set in motion the 'forebidden fruit' mechanism whereby ineffective censorship merely makes the less controlled video products more attractive. This is a difficult matter to resolve. We believe, however, that by making the cinema cheaper and more available to adolescents a significant counter attraction to video violence would be created.

3.2. Video Viewing: When?

It was evident from all the groups interviewed that there are clear seasonal and weekly patterns to viewing. All agreed that one watched far more during winter than summer. In spring and summer it was much more desirable to be outside. In general video is used when the weather is bad and being out and about in the park or in town is impossible.

Weekends, especially Friday and Saturday evenings, were the most typical times for video viewing. This is not surprising since the rest of the week is taken up with school etc. Of greater significance, however, is probably the problem of availability. As we shall see in Section 3.3. video viewing in this age group is essentially a peer group activity and is practiced in the absence of parents. During the week the TV set is liable to be in use by the family. Parents are much more likely to be at home and are much less likely to tolerate the invasion of three or four friends. As Roe (1983a) has pointed out availability is, in many different respects, an important factor in adolescent video use. The problem is that while video films are easily available whenever one wants them - the essential television set, to which the video-cassette machine must be connected, is not. It is subject to the demands and control of parents and other family members. It is therefore logical that more video viewing should take place precisely when this demand and control may be least, i.e. on Friday and Saturday evenings.

3.3. Video Viewing: With Whom?

In the 1981 Växjö data collection on video it was found that video viewing was overwhelmingly a peer group activity. Amongst the whole of the 7th grade respondents (from whom the interviewees for this report were subsequently taken) 75 % reported viewing with friends and only 9 % with parents. Amongst the 9th grade respondents 77 % viewed with friends and only 2 % with parents (Roe 1981, p 20). The interviews confirmed that this tendency still held. The most desirable viewing situation was comprised of a group of 5-6 friends. Individual viewing, while it occurred, was regarded as rather boring since it was better to have someone to talk to and discuss the film with. Viewing in larger groups, which occasionally occurred when very popular films were being viewed, was disliked as it was too distracting. In large groups there was too much talking, too much movement, and one could not concentrate on the film.

This peer group dimension of video viewing is very important and sets video as a medium apart from TV (which is primarily a family based medium). Moreover, as we shall see, it is the male peer group which predominates and is the central focus of video viewing, especially with respect to violent and pornographic films. Video viewing has come to have a specific role in the adolescent male peer group (see also Roe 1983b, 1983c). Perhaps the medium most analogous to it in this respect is the way in which listening to 'pop' music operates in the female peer group.

Usually it was the boys who took the initiative to view video and most often decided what was to be viewed. The viewing groups therefore tended to be of two main types, all male groups and mixed groups where the initiative and selection had been male. It was rare for all girl groups to view video in the same way. One group expressed this clearly,

I: "When you talk to the girls about these things they say that it is always the guys who decide. They never get to decide what to see."
- "Yes, but of course we do the hiring. Its the guys who hire."
- "Yes, exactly."
- "Its always us who pay as well."
- "Exactly. They've no right to say anything, if they're not going to do any hiring themselves.

Some of the girls confirmed this tendency,

- "I think it's mostly the lads who decide. 'I want to see this' and 'I want to see that'. So I usually let him see what he wants, even if it's not any good."

I: "But you agree?"

- "Yes I do. Sometimes I say what I want to see ... but then I have to pay. It's not exactly cheap you know!"

The all female video group was reported as being much more unusual than the all male viewing group,

I: "Do you think that the girls watch together as a group of girls in the same way as you watch in a group?"

- "No."
- "I don't think so."

I: "So they watch only when guys are around?"

- "Yes, it seems so according to them. I know girls who watch video. They never sit themselves in a group and watch though unless the guys do it."
- "I don't know any girls who go out and hire films ... and then sit by themselves and watch."
- It's pretty strange really ... especially since there are lots of guys who do."

I: "Why is that? Don't they have the money or don't they want to spend the money?"

- "They have got it for sure."
- "They are just not interested. I don't think they are interested in the same way."
- "They sit and talk crap to each other instead."

I: "And listen to music?"

- "Yes."
- "As far as I know."

We see here how the boys value their own activities but regard those of the girls as 'crap'. At the same time the girls remarks betrayed a wry dislike and boredom for male interests with a somewhat resigned and tolerant attitude towards them in order to 'keep the peace'. Clearly there is a good deal of negotiation between the sexes going on here. We shall come back to the differences between the sexes in video viewing in section

3.4.2. In fact a few of the girls did report occasional viewing of video in all female groups (to watch 'romantic films' such as 'Love Story') but this appeared to be the exception rather than the rule.

One thing that both the sexes were agreed upon was the undesirability of having parents present when video viewing took place. Several groups stressed that parents were not welcome in the video group. As one boy put it,

I: "Are parents there when you watch?"
- "No, they get thrown out."
I: "Every time?"
- "Yes."
- "I usually go to friends and watch there. They don't come."
I: "And their parents are not present either?"
- "No."
- "They tend not to like the kinds of films that we like."

Several girls groups also stated that parents tended not to know what was being viewed on video. As one girl put it, 'parents don't always know what kinds of films you hire. You watch them when they aren't at home.'

This peer group dimension of video viewing has a number of different aspects. Firstly, as Roe (1983a) has pointed out video viewing plays a very specific role in the adolescent peer group, especially for boys (we shall return to this point later). Secondly parents are excluded, and for two main reasons - video viewing is regarded as a peer activity, where they are not welcome and, it is clearly perceived that parents would disapprove of the kinds of films being viewed. A further point with regard to group viewing is also, of course, that viewing in a group makes the cost of hiring very much less per person, and, as we saw, the cost of video hiring is an important aspect of viewing.

3.4. Video Viewing: What?

In the 1981 data collection information was gained on what the Växjö respondents tended to watch on video. At this time films, especially horror, adventure and violence films dominated along with pornography and crime films. Some also obviously used video to record TV programmes. It was this overall viewing pattern among children and adolescents which provoked much of the debate on video. It was evident in the later interviews, however,

that there had been some change in viewing patterns since the original data had been collected. Almost all the groups reported a move away from the violent/horror and pornographic films as a more varied selection of 'quality' films had become available on the market,

- "Before, I used to watch a lot of violent and action films."
I: "And now?"
- "Now it's very mixed, comedy and so on mostly."
- "You get fed up with violent films."
- "Yes, I'm tired of them."

And another group,

- "Yeah, it's mostly action now. We did porn. Then you get tired of it, sex films and all that. And then these horror films. You get fed up with them as well."
- "I'm fed up with violence films."
I: "Why?"
- "I don't know. I think they are all more or less the same - if you've seen twenty horror films (sic) you've seen everything. They are all the same ... It's the same with porn - that is so boring. Porn is hopeless I think."

Partly the change was a result of getting fed up with the violent-horrific-pornographic fare and partly a result of the fact that in the early days of hire video there wasn't a great deal else available to watch. Now that quality films were increasingly arriving in the shops they were inducing a diversification of viewing.

This fact is clearly reflected in the statistics for the hire video market. In the first half of 1981 the video hire market was, compared with later years, very restricted. One report (Kågeson 1981) presented figures which showed that there were only 500 films available on the Swedish market in 1981. Similar findings were reported in the same year by a government sponsored inquiry (SOU 1981).By the autumn of that year Hultén and Wachtmeister (1981) reported that there were by then 800 titles available, not counting pornography. By the end of 1983 the total number of titles available had risen to 3,500 of which 2,900 were marketed by 'established suppliers'. In addition there were 1,000 pornography titles available. By this time not all titles were

films. Cassettes on various sports, music gymnastics and technical subjects were also available. In total there were between 650,000 and 700,000 cassettes in the country which were hired on average once a week ('Video' magazine 1983). Lists of the most popular hire films are now printed and these tend to be dominated by the larger Hollywood productions. In January 1984, for example, the top three films in Sweden were 'Rocky 3', 'Firefox' and '48 hours'. ('Scandinavian Film and Video' 1984)

There also appears to be a 'novelty' curve in video viewing. When the machine is first acquired a great deal of time is spent with it. Then as the novelty wears off the amount of viewing tends to decline to more genial levels.

I: "How many times a week or a month do you watch video?"
- "It varies. Those who have a video, who have had one for some time, they get fed up with it."
- "Yes. When we first got video then we had, yes maybe ten films a week and now it's probably only about one every three weeks."
I: "Really. So you've got fed up with it?"
- "No, not really but you hardly ever have time to watch it, and it's too expensive."

Though there were individual cases where post-novelty viewing continued at a high level (e.g. 4-5 films a week) the norm for the interviewees as a whole seemed to vary between one film a week to one a month depending on the seasonal and weather factors mentioned earlier.

Action-adventure films tended to dominate preferences by this time, at least amongst the boys. Even so, not all violent and pornographic films were disliked. Important distinctions were made between qualitatively different types of content in these categories,

I: "What do you watch most?"
- "Horror."
- "Thrillers."
- "And action."
- "Yes, it's mostly action. Definitely action."
- "Funny films."
- "Yes, Monty Python films."
I: "So you like comedy and funny films?"

- (All) "Yes."
I: "Not porn films?"
- "Sometimes."
I: "Sometimes?"
- "Yes, you can't watch them often."
I: "Why not?"
- "You can watch one of those films for ten miuntes and then you're fed up with it."
- "When I hired two of them I got fed up before the end of the first one."
I: "Really! Why do you get fed up with them?"
- "It's the same thing all the time."
- "You get bored."
I: "And violent films?"
- "Yeah, they're good."
- "Some, some of them can be good."
- "It depends on which ones you mean."
I: "How?"
- "There are those really horrible ones where they rip open the stomach and throw the guts out over the floor (sic). That's horrible to see."
- "Yeah! You feel really ill."
I: "And those are boring?"
- "Yes."
- "Yes, really."
I: "So it's not just porn films you get fed up with but violence as well."
- "Yes. But not real violence. You don't get fed up with that. Fighting and so on. Like these police films they are usually good."

The blood-dripping type of horror was recurrently disliked especially in comparison to more 'realistic violence' such as police violence, teenage gangs etc with which it was easier to identify. In terms of pornography the almost universally condemned 'hard-porn' was often contrasted to the much preferred 'happy-porn' a predominantly Danish genre which combines pornography with humour and incident,

- "I'm not really very interested in porn."
- "If you've seen one you've seen them all."
I: "Every group I've met says exactly the same about porn."

- "It's the same thing all the time."
- "That 'Happy' porn is the best."
- "Yes, they're a laugh."

Even the girls, who were generally even more negative to porn than the boys, admitted to liking 'happy' porn more. In general 'hard' porn seemed to be a short phase through which younger boys and the curious of both sexes went through before the inevitable reaction of boredom set in. In fact several groups saw pornography more as an adult preoccupation, especially the stereotypical 'dirty old man'. Even the lower quality types of violent films, otherwise disliked, were preferred to hard porn, simply because there tended to be more of a story to hold the interest of the viewer.

As a response to the widespread public debate in Sweden between 1981 and 1983 about video film content, efforts were made to 'clean up' the market by removing the worst of the violent films from the hire boutiques. These efforts were made both by the authorities (through legislation) and by the industry itself. Undoubtedly these moves had some effect. However, the difficulties of properly controlling the video market (where ease of copying and pirate distribution is so marked) were reflected in the fact that many interviewees reported that if one wished to, it was still possible to obtain the 'nastiest' cassettes,

I: "Is it easy to get hold of the worst, toughest films?"
- (All) "Yes."
I: "In the video boutiques? I thought that a lot of those films had disappeared now!"
- "Yes, most of them are gone. But some of them are still around."
- "That's right, they haven't taken all of them away ... some are still left."
- "Some of them have a lot of violent films - like those zombie films."
I: "So it's no problem to get hold of them?"
- (All) "No."

Another group was more specific about the continuing availability of the toughest films,

- "I haven't noticed any difference."
- "You can still go in, they're still around."

- "They look under the counter and say 'now let's see what we've got here'and they take out the horror drawer ...
- "They say they have got rid of them but they hire them out all the same."
- "Then there are those who have copied themselves - pirate copies."

All in all it seems clear that although there has been some improvement in the situation regarding 'nasty' films since 1981, they are still available to those prepared to look for them. It should also be remembered that although the nastiest violent films now account for a smaller proportion of the total number of available films, it is a smaller proportion of an expanding market. In absolute terms, therefore, it is quite possible that the 'problem' of violent films is more widespread than previously and that in absolute terms there are more young people watching this kind of content than previously. Unfortunately we cannot say for sure. One effect of pushing these titles 'under the counter' is to make them more or less invisible so that we can no longer assess how widespread their use actually is. Regrettably this is often the case with censurious action. However, we should not fall into the trap of mistaking non-visibility for actual removal, even though it may satisfay the public conscience. The estimation of the actual extent of the viewing of extreme violence should be a priority for future research.

We noted above that as far as the boys were concerned action-adventure films were the most popular. What constitutes an action film? Often the respondents were rather vague in this respect and there seemed to be a degree of 'action is in the eye of the beholder' about their definitions. In general, however, a number of more or less essential ingredients were required. These centred around car chases, motorbike action, fighting and the activities of 'tough guys'. There was also a minority public for Karate films. These tastes were reflected in the names of the stars and films most often mentioned as being liked; these included Clint Eastwood, The James Bond films, the 'Trinity' films with Bud Spencer and Terence Hill - and for the Karate lovers, Bruce Lee. There is nothing especially startling in these names and it would be safe to say that here video has merely taken over a well-established segment of the cinema public, a taste segment which always included a large proportion of young males.

3.4.1. The 'Horror' and 'Violence' Films

As we noted above (p 17) the greater part of the public debate on video in Sweden centred on the violent and horrific nature of much of the material available for viewing. Even though efforts have been made to 'clean up' the market, at the same time as a far greater variety of films has become available, it was argued (p 22) that in absolute terms the incidence of viewing of these types of films may be greater now than previously. It was also noted (p 18) that adolescent viewers themselves reported a move away from such material partly as a result of a reaction to its monotony and partly precisely because a much greater choice had been created. Nevertheless it was obvious from the interviews that a fairly large number of violent and horrific films had been, and were continuing to be seen, by our respondents. What kinds of films were these and how did our respondents describe the 'nastiest' scenes? It is to this question that we shall now turn and it is hoped that we shall be able, in the process, to give some idea of the nature of 'video violence'. Such an excursion is necessary not least because the authors believe that only a minority of the social commentators, journalists, youth workers, academics etc who created such a furore during the video debates have actually seen any of the content they so hotly discuss. In an earlier report (Roe 1983b) the adolescents' angry reaction to this 'debate in ignorance' and its ideological calls for censorship have already been recorded. This is not to defend the films or the medium. We merely wish to point out that whatever the merits or otherwise of video films, wholesale condemnation from a position of ignorance or half truth (even when asserted by spokesmen of the dominant culture) helps nothing. Public policy should be based upon accurate information and reasoned discussion, not dogma or ideological assertion in ignorance of the facts of the case- whatever they may be. It should be noted that we are here only concerned with describing the contents of such films, as retold to us by the interviewees. Discussion of the effects of violent and horrific scenes will follow in section 4.

Many of the films described appear to have been composed of traditional horror themes; ghosts, zombies, the unknown, the ghostly, the mysterious; upon which scenes of realistically explicit and extreme violence had been grafted:

I: "What was the last film you saw on video?"
- "Dead and buried."
I: "What was that like?"
- "It was bloody gruesome."
I: "Why?"
- "They murder each other. Then they're in hospital and they come with a needle and inject them in the eyes."

Here we see what appears to be the typical model of 'video violence' in its essence. The classical theme of being buried alive, a major subject of horror literature since Poe, overlaid by very unPoe-like gratuitous violence. Similarly we find the theme of the 'living dead', another classic horror subject, treated in much the same way,

I: "Tell me about these zombie films. What they are about. I've never seen any."
- "It's those horrible people that melt from the inside - those where the skin just runs ... it's grisly and horrible and then they come and bang on the windows where people are sleeping - oh dear!"
- "Yeah they're dead people, that's what they are."
- "Well, not really people, but they move around and act like people."
- "Only they melt all the time." (sic)

This seems innocuous enough and in the mainstream traditions of horror literature and cinema. Other zombie films however leave the realms of suspense and fear to amplify the theme of violence.

- "There was one (zombie film) - they were on an island. Then there was a doctor. He swopped brains ... "
- "Yeah, that one was terrible."
- "Oh yes that was gruesome."
I: "Swopped brains?"
- ... "It was awful. He swopped over a brain ... he killed people ... and swopped brains in and out ... and then they were on a beach, a man and a girl. They stood on a beach waiting for a boat. Then a small motor boat came and a horrible zombie. He was, yeah he was so horrible so you wouldn't believe. And she started screaming so he picks up this, what's it called? The boats' outboard motor and pushes it into her face.

You just see everything shooting out."

I: "Is it a close up shot?"

- "Yeah- you just see everything shooting out - OH! It was the worst I've seen!"

- "I think 'Halloween II' was worse!"

The entire gamut of horror themes seems to have been explored with similar amplifications. Thus cannibalism no longer portrays the typical 'missionary-in-boiling-cauldron' image, but,

- "Cannibal films are really horrible ... they chop off heads and pick out brains and start eating. You can see films like that ... where they are sitting there and eating."

While the mysterious properties of mirrors are reduced to,

- "... and then you see ... when the girl is about to go she stands in front of the mirror combing her hair. You just see the mirror, how the mirror splinters ... it breaks up and all the glass splinters go towards her and then - bang - she falls down and she's full of pieces of glass, and the blood starts dripping out - and drips into a glass on the floor below."

While our respondents reported quite a number of films portraying violent-horror films only very occasionally did they report seeing brutal violence in combination with pornography. Probably this was connected with the fact that pornography was disliked and regarded as extremely monotonous and boring (and, we should remind ourselves, as an adult taste). Occasionally such films were reported, but even here they appeared to have been seen by accident, and were similarly disliked,

- "There is one called 'bloody revenge' - it's about a rape. I thought it was going to be about revenge. Then it was, I suppose, 45 minutes, just rape - then there were some slaughters - then mostly rape. I mean it was called 'bloody revenge'. They might just as well have called it 'bloody rape' instead."

It should not be imagined that the teenage video audience for video

films is an uncritical audience which accepts passively everything it gets. Quite the contrary. Many respondents expressed their disapproval of various aspects of video violence and horror on a number of grounds. In general it was apparent that for most of our respondents such content was neither liked nor understood. For some, criticism was based upon the perceived lack of realism, or lack of a story.

- "Sometimes it's just knives and axes and heads off - nothing else - it's so boring."

For others it was over-exaggeration which was the basis of criticism,

- "It was really terrible, there was a skin transplant and they thought she was unconscious, but she wasn't. She was just lying there waiting for them - and then she ran away - and got something like rabies, but she was sucking blood and she had a pick that she stuck into their sides. It was so exaggerated."

Perhaps the main reaction, however, was incomprehension - of what such films were attempting to say, and of why they were made at all,

- "I don't understand what those films are all about. When you see a scythe in the head and a scewer ... these blood films."
- "Yeah, it's just slaughter, slaughter, slaughter."
- "No story."
- "Ketchup and mustard and everything."

While another group remarked,

- "Then they use one of those ..."
- "Meat mincers"
- "Yeah, meat mincers. A man fell into one and came out as minced meat. It looked really horrible."
- "It's things like that you can't really understand."
- "But they're making a new one, Exterminated II." (sic)

Finally, the general incomprehensibility felt by many of our respondents in the face of explicit gratuitous violence was perhaps best expressed

by one girl's questionning reaction to a scene,

- "I saw a film a few years ago where a ten year old little boy chopped up his mother's lover with a bloody great meat cleaver. How can you show things like that?"

Perhaps, at this juncture, we may legitimately ask ourselves why, if such films are neither understood nor liked, adolescents watch them? An explanation for this phenomenon will be offered in section 3.5. Here it will suffice clearly to differentiate 'viewing' from 'liking'. This is an important point which is often overlooked. Wall and Cederblad (1982) in a study of Stockholm teenagers show that there are clear differences between what teenagers watch on video and what they like to watch, i e much of what they viewed was actually disliked. This should not appear so strange when we recall that many activities which are socially acquired such as alcohol, coffee and tobacco are literally 'acquired' tastes which may produce strong dislike and even symptoms of physical revulsion when first experienced. Yet the majority continue to use them. The analogy should not be stretched too far but it illustrates the fact that from use we cannot always assume liking or preference, especially where strong social pressures are operative (as they may be in video viewing, see section 3.5.).

3.4.2. Differences Between the Sexes

As we saw in section 3.2. the girls tended to complain that the boys usually decided what the peer group should watch on video. Often the boys replied that since they took the initiative to view, and perhaps more importantly, paid for the hiring, then they had the right to decide which films to hire. This discussion between the sexes is only one aspect of a more general difference, not to say conflict, in respect of video viewing. The boys' prediliction for 'action', 'tough' and, for a period, pornographic films was a frequent complaint of the female respondents. Many of the girls reported that they preferred 'romantic' or 'sad' films most of all (often the two were equated - a fact interesting in itself) but that the boys usually refused to watch such films. One group of girls expressed these frictions quite clearly,

I: "If you were able to choose, what would you have seen instead?"

- "Then I would take a love film. I've seen the film - what was it called..."
- "First love."
- "No, I've seen that too, it was another one. It was about a blind girl. She loses her sight from some illness. Then she meets a man that she is never able to see. Then, later, she has an operation and she gets her sight back and is able to see him and she's really happy ... but she only gets to see him for two weeks. Then she goes blind again ... I like films like that. A bit sad. It's the sort of thing that can happen to anybody."

I: "Do you think there is any difference between what girls and boys like?"

- "(All) "Yes"
- "Yes, I think so. A lot of difference I think."

I: "What do the boys like best?"

- "War films I think."
- "Karate and all that."
- "Cars, these car chases."

The older group of girls (aged 17) told a similar story,

- "It depends on what your friends are interested in. My friends are most interested in car films and they are so boring after a while, sitting there watching them skidding and crashing till in the end you give up watching. You should be able to watch different kinds of films sometimes."
- "It's exactly the same with my friends. It was all these cannibals and you know, these zombie films and werewolves and that. In the end you couldn't do anything but laugh ..."
- "You say, "What shall we watch?" "And then it's most often the guys who decide. So then I say, but can't we see one of those romantic films? but they just say "What, That shit." I like them, romantic films. But they have to have their boring old cars. It's so boring ..."

...

I: "Why don't the lads want to see romantic films, then?"

- "They daren't watch them. They daren't show that they can cry too."

Similarly another group of girls reported,

I: "Why do the guys say things like that are rubbish then? There are men in the romantic films too."

- "Maybe they like them, but they are afraid to show it."
- "I think they want to see films where there is something happening."
- "They have such poor concentration. They can't, they can't sit themselves down. There has to be something exciting happening the whole time."

This contempt for the boys video preferences did not go unreciprocated. One group of boys displayed their disdain for the girls' romantic tastes thus,

I: "Is that what they want to see, romantic films?"

- "Yeah, that's all."
- "Yes, it's these 'feel sorry for' films."
- "Yeah, them, they just sit there howling."
- "Weepy films."
- "The sofa gets wet."

The girls themselves felt no compunction about their emotional reactions to 'romantic' films,

I: "... do you see romantic films?"

- (All) "Yes."
- "Yes, I have, lots of times."
- "Yes, they're lovely."
- "Have you seen 'love story'? That's really romantic."
- "I saw one, 'American Graffitti' I think it was called. That was really romantic. Really nice."
- "Yes, I felt so sorry for him at the end, I couldn't stop crying. It was really good."
- "Yes, I'm dead sensitive as well ... anything like that and I start crying."
- "So am I."

...

- "When we sit at home watching romantic films, my mother and I sitting there sobbing, my father just sits there looking at us as if we were mad."

I: "Isn't he affected by it or doesn't he want to show it?"
- "I don't know. But it's not everybody that can cry. I wonder how many men can cry. Probably not many."
- "When they are by themselves. They daren't show it."

This sexual difference in the willingness or ability to express feelings or emotion was not limited only to romantic films. A number of girls also remarked on the same tendency with regard to violent scenes. Boys, it appeared had to show themselves 'tough' with regard to watching very nasty, violent scenes (see section 3.5.) whereas many of the girls reacted more negatively to them, often openly admitting to being scared afterwards. On the way home for example,

I: "Are you scared after films?"
- "Yes, it happens."
...
I: "Do the guys get scared as well?"
- "Yes, but they don't show it."
- "Yes, of course they do, but they daren't show it."
- "Well, they do get scared of course. It's not many but some do."

The older group of girls (17 years), a number of whom had well established heterosexual relationships, remarked that sometimes the boys would admit to girls that they didn't like, or were scared by, violent/horror films. This tended only to occur, however, in more or less established relationships where the boys could trust the girl not to betray his confidences to other boys,

- "It all depends on whether a guy is going out with a girl and on whether he can trust her. Then he dares to say, "I'm scared. I don't like films like this." And he knows that the girl isn't going to say to everybody, "Hey he's scared by those films. He's afraid to watch films like that."
- "Yes, but I think that that is really good if he dares to admit it."
- "Yes, it is."
- "Because usually of course, they have to play up, "What me scared!" ... A few say straight out, "I dont't like watching films like that ... there are some guys who say it straight out."

- "But not very many."
- "No, that's true there aren't."

A further aspect of expressed differences in video viewing according to sex results from the sex biased nature of the films themselves. Some of the girls reacted specifically against the tendency for women to be the targets for violence in horror and violent films. One group was very clear as to the role played by women in these films,

I: "Are there women in these films as well?"
- "Yes of course. It's them that get killed."

This view was confirmed by another group,

- "It's always the girls that nasty things happen to."
- "They get killed"
- "And chased."

...

- "It's never them who is the hero of the film."
- (All) "No."

...

- "Because it's always the men. 'Oh! I have to save her' - and, 'bang', 'bang', 'bang' - ' now you are dead, now you.' So he gets the girl. Yes! No! Now she's kidnapped again. Out and chase after her. They can never change roles so that the girl does the most. Instead the girl has to be pretty and stylish."

Similar comments were made by two girls groups about the characteristic sexual roles in pornographic films. While all the girls groups shared the boys' 'once you've seen one you've seen them all' attitude towards the inherent boredom of pornography, these two groups were concerned that the mechanistic, hard, non-stop portrayals of sex in such films could give young lads wrong ideas about what it is like so that they might think that they had to act in these ways. Furthermore such portrayals could scare 'young' girls (sic). One of these groups also came out very strongly against animal and child pornography, which while not generally available in Sweden, could (they reported) be obtained from neighbouring Denmark.

Pornography was likewise criticized by the girls for the fact that

the women in them were usually good-looking, whereas the men didn't maintain the same sort of standard,

- "It's mostly girls in porn films, mostly good-looking girls."
- "There aren't nearly as many good looking men as there are girls."
- "It's the same in all of these magazines, the porn magazines. It's exactly the same. It's always the girl who is undervalued the whole time, getting an inferiority complex and everything.

...

- "And the lads sit there watching it taunting the girls - Oh! you don't have tits like that and so on."
- "Yes, it's just the same as when they sit there with a magazine and say, 'Why don't you look like that? Why are you so fat?' ... So the girls go and look and, 'Jesus, am I supposed to look like that?' So then they go on one of those diets and become completely, I don't know!'

I: "Are the girls good looking in these films then?"

- "The girls? Yes, they have tiny waists and big asses. Asses like Venus!"
- "Made up as much as possible."
- "Hair lying perfect on the pillow."
- "The are so sweet - ... latest fashion."

...

- "Look at Dallas ... For example when Pam wakes up. Hair perfect, eye shadow, mascara, rouge, cream, everything. Everything's so perfect! She's just woken up! Hair lying perfect like that! It's not realistic."

One group of girls discussed the style and content of pornographic films in these terms at length. The discussion is worth quoting not only because of the insights which it gives into the films themselves and the girls' view of them, but also because it illustrates well that curious blend of sexual sophistication, naivity and conservatism so characteristic of mid-adolescence,

- "I suppose we are not so interested in that kind of thing."
- "Boys and girls don't think in the same kind of way when it comes to sex of course. I mean like when they come into the shower when we have physical education, for example, and it's all ooh! and ah! and so on."
- "It's mostly girls in the porn films. Usually if there is a guy in it

it's some old fella, well old, between 30 and 40."

- "Yes, those that need the money."

...

- "I saw one, "The Porn star" it was called or something like that. He was pretty good looking - but it's the first one I've seen who was."
- "But I think you don't look so much for the sake of the body anyway ... It's mostly the face."
- "But most often it's one guy and maybe three girls."
- "Yes. It's never three guys and one girl."
- (All) "No."
- "That's right three girls and a guy."
- "I think that's a bit unrealistic if only because there aren't really any girls who would want to share their guy, with another girl."

...

- "If there's three girls who have to share one man."
- "I feel sorry for him."
- "Ah, he's doing alright, but it's a pity for them. Jealousy between them."
- "No ... Well it depends whether you know them or not ... if you don't know them I don't think you get too jealous."

...

- "I saw one once, it was a man and a woman. They started to get undressed and so on. And then suddenly another guy comes through the door. "Hello" he says and then starts taking his clothes off!"
- "Oh Christ! It's that kind of thing ..."
- "I don't believe it happens."

...

- "I don't believe you share your guy or your girl with anybody else."
- "No, hardly."
- "Not like it is in the films."
- (All) "No."
- "It's never like that."

We have seen, then, that there exist clear differences between the sexes in preferences for, and reactions to, various types of video content. In particular we have examined such differences with respect to romantic films, violence/horror films and pornography. The results show not only

marked differences, but even clear conflicts of taste and viewing preferences. These differences should come as no surprise to students of communications research. A growing number of reports has documented significant differences between the sexes in terms of television viewing (Flodin et al 1981, Sonesson 1979, Roe 1983a, Johnsson-Smaragdi 1983), reading (Flodin et al 1982), and popular music (Roe 1983a). Along with age, social background and level of education, sex is one of the most significant factors in accounting for differences in media uses and preferences (especially in combination with the other factors just named). Therefore in all discussions concerning adolescents' uses of video it is vital to bear this fact in mind if we are going to be able accurately to map the uses and gratifications adolescents have with regard to video.

3.5. Video Viewing: Why?

The question of why Swedish adolescents, or at least a significant proportion of them, embraced video so quickly and used it in the ways they did has already been extensively dealt with in two previous reports (Roe 1983b, 1983c). The discussion in this section will therefore be based largely on the findings and arguments presented in the earlier reports.

Roe (1981) noted the importance of the concepts of 'choice' and 'control' with respect to video viewing. These factors are especially significant in adolescence. As Roe 1983b pointed out, adolescence is that period of life when the move away from family and the pre-occupation with peers, besides the increasing needs for person-autonomy, make control over various aspects of leisure a vital concern. Adolescents' peculiar uses of popular music for example show clearly the operation of these concerns. Music is employed for identity, as a means to group interaction, for courting (dancing) and, not least, to exclude adults. As Denisov (1975) has stressed 'pop' is essentially youthful. Meanwhile, other media tend to be dominated by adults.

Willis (1978) indicated how a given medium can always be appropriated by a group and used in unexpected ways not comprehended by 'dominant' groups. In respect to existing media these possibilities are limited since these media are likely to be 'policed' by the dominant culture (in 'pop' for example, by banning records from the vital radio channels). New media, on the other hand, provide excellent opportunities for subcultures or groups to appropirate the new forms at least until the uncomprehending 'policing agen-

cies' of the mainstream culture move in and realize the potential of the new form.

The history of adolescent uses of video in Sweden provides an excellent illustration of this process. The new medium, with its greatly increased opportunities for user control and choice, was in its early years, appropriated by anti-school youth (see Roe 1981, 1983b, 1983c) for the purposes of viewing types of content not available to young people in the other media. It should be stressed that this appropriation was an active selection, even perhaps a functional one in terms of individual and group identity. It was a deliberate signal of distance, of disapprobation with a dominant adult culture which had judged and rejected these young people as 'failures', as not worthy of socially certificated esteem. Roe 1983a has also shown how a similar mechanism operates with regard to preference for socially disapproved forms of popular music.

The respondents were generally well aware of societies' 'policing' of media and other activities. They were mostly very negative to any form of censorship or film cutting believing instead an individual autonomy and self responsibility. Attempts by 'authority' to control video were particularly resented,

A: "Something I reacted against, something I saw on TV it was. It was one of these debates about video violence and all that - there was a guy who talked about banning it ..."

B: "That was Wickström*that was."

A: "Then they asked him if he had seen any films himself - of course he hadn't. He didn't know a thing about what he was talking about - he hadn't seen a single film, but he wanted to ban them."

C: "He didn't even know what video was."

A: "I don't understand what all these bans and restrictions are good for. It just makes everything more exciting. As soon as it is forbidden, then, hell, what crap. It is just the same as with all these drugs. "Don't smoke hash, this will happen to you, and that will happen to you." So you start wondering, what the hell - they write so much about it, it must be good. You get really excited about it - what's it really like - it must be fun, something must happen since everybody is doing it."

* The Minister of Education and Culture

Or as one 15 year old boy pithily put it,

- "... that's what Swedes are best at I think - age limits. Age limits on everything. Forbid everything here - hell soon you won't be able to buy a packet of juicy fruits until you are 15."

In actual fact the controls over content and age were seen as being quite ineffective. Few had ever experienced difficulty in obtaining whatever films they wanted. As we saw earlier, some shops merely keep the 'nasties' under the counter and there is, in any case, a circulation of pirate copies for those 'in the know'. The respondents often compared this ineffectiveness of control to that pertaining to alcohol - "you can always get it if you really want it".

Roe (1983b, p 22) identified five special functions which video viewing serves in the adolescent milieu:

1. It is available and cheap.
2. It provides opportunities to exercise autonomy and provides a focus around which the peer group may organize its activities.
3. It is relatively free from adult and general cultural policing. It is admirably suited for the purposes of excluding parents.
4. It operates as a special form of 'toughness', a manliness test in the male peer group.
5. It provides an 'anti-establishment profile'. For those denigrated by the schooling system it provides an outlet for disapprobation with adult authority.

Firstly, video is available and cheap. This aspect is apparently rather important, prosaic as it may be to those who wish to read darker and more sinister motives. The amount of readily disposable money available to the average 15 year old is often overestimated in the generalizations about 'affluent youth' (which may in any case be a redundant concept in these times of high teenage unemployment). Video's relative cheapness was a recurrent motivation for viewing. If one shared the cost of hiring a film between five or six the cost per person fell well within the average budget. This cost aspect was most significant perhaps in comparison with the cost per person of attending the cinema.

Video is also, importantly, available to this age group. This may at

first appear as a banal statement. However it is put into focus when we remember that little else (which goes anyway towards fulfilling the needs of this age group) is easily available. Many expressed deep dissatisfaction with the entertainment facilities available to them. They experienced themselves as in some ways at an 'age between', too old for childish persuits and youth clubs, too young to be allowed entrance to more adult forms and places of entertainment where the presence of alcohol forbids their attendance. One solution was to occupy the public parks and streets (the latter especially on weekend evenings). Another was to populate the 'flipper' halls and billiard rooms. It is also worthwhile to note that the marked seasonal nature of video viewing also supports the lack of alternatives explanation of at least a part of that viewing. Video was generally reported to be a winter activity which fell off markedly when the lighter, warmer evenings arrived and one could be out with friends.

The problem here is not just that of providing more adult-run leisure facilities since at this age the adolescents' striving for autonomy precludes such facile solutions, (and to the repeated consternation of generations of adults leads to the continual failure of the adult-run centres and activities which are from time to time provided). What are needed are places and resources where mid-adolescents may exercise the maximum of autonomy with the minimum of adult presence and interference.

We are led to conclude therefore that while no doubt possessing its own inherent attractions the viewing of video films of whatever character is probably made more attractive by the dearth of cheap, realistic attractions for this specific age group. For those with hobbies, music, reading or sports interests the problem may never become acute, but those are generally not the ones regularly watching video violence anyway. It is often the other, more marginal, ones with little or no interest in school work or conventional hobbies, who are no good at sport and are hardly ever seen in conventional youth clubs who feel themselves most excluded from mainstream leisure pursuits. And, it must be stressed again, the problem is not to be approached by adult run pursuits (cf. Thunberg et al 1982). It is especially this group of young people who by this time have had enough of teachers, social workers, youth leaders and any other philanthropic adults who might happen along. If we are seriously to create counter attractions to undesirable video viewing we need new initiatives and, perhaps, just a little more imagination.

Secondly, video viewing provides opportunities to exercise autonomy.

It is an activity which helps to provide a focus for the peer group. All the respondents agreed that the optimal viewing milieu was composed of a group of 5-6 friends. It was very clear that video viewing is a group based phenomenon in this age group and any explanation of analysis of its uses and effects which ignores this fact and examines video viewing at the individual level is bound to be at best a partial explanation. As we shall see group pressure on members to watch tough films plays an important role. We have also already noted that viewing takes place most often when parents are not present.

The nature of video as a medium with its capacity for control over almost all aspects of the viewing situation makes it extremely difficult for parents (or anyone else) to supervise its use. Indeed it is precisely this difficulty of supervision which is one of the attractions of the medium for youth. In this relationship all the advantages lie with the user and not with the would be supervisor. Video is the perfect medium for viewer autonomy and, it should be stressed again, nowhere is autonomy more important than in the adolescent peer group.

Thirdly, and closely related to the previous points, video has hitherto been relatively free from adult and general cultural policing. This is less true now than when the interviews were undertaken since control legislation and taxation measures have since been applied to video use by the authorities. While these have had some effect their overall efficiacy must be doubted because of the inherent difficulties in attempting to control a medium where copying is so easily achieved. In any event - for a few years the new medium provided a temporary space within which certain groups of teenagers were able to act autonomously to select and view types of content not approved of by the control agencies of the mainstream culture.

Fourthly, video viewing serves as a special form of 'toughness', a manliness test in the male adolescent peer group. Indications of this phenomenon were first reported by Wall and Cederblad (1982) in their Stockholm study. The media panel interviews in Växjö have since confirmed that this aspect plays an important role in explaining why some boys watch the more gruesome films of explicit violence. Many admit that they dislike the violent films but watch 'because everyone else does'. One group of boys stated quite explicitly that no-one objected to extreme violence because 'you don't want to show yourself up in front of your friends', for fear of being branded a coward. This fear of ridicule was a recurrent theme in explaining why many who neither liked nor understood extreme violence

actually continued to attend to it. The girls in particular were both far more ready to condemn such films and able to perceive its function for the boys (see p 30). The girls stressed how the boys had to act tough and prove that they could take it. In all probability the girls have more power than they realize to stop the viewing of extreme violence by expressing more openly their opinion (evident in the interviews) that they have great respect for the boy with the courage to stand up to the group and admit openly that he doesn't like violent video contents and will not watch such scenes.

The display of bravado and the mechanism of the manliness test is probably more or less inherent in the male adolescent peer group. It takes many forms, flirting with danger, expression of physical prowess, rule and law breaking etc. It would be naive to suppose that we can altogether remove this aspect of development even supposing that we wish to do so. The problem lies in the lack of channels which society provides for the expression of this type of behaviour. In our legitimate desire to protect young people from danger and harm we may have gone too far, producing an over-protected arid environment where the healthy expression of bravado and 'toughness' is forced into other, more perversive forms.

Fifthly, video viewing of undesirable material provides an 'anti-establishment' profile whereby those labelled and denigrated by the schooling system as failures may announce their disapprobation with adult authority. According to Morley (1980) the school should be seen as the key to the analysis of the media audience since it is a major determinant of the 'cultural codes and competences acquired by the audience'. There is, it is claimed, a 'close relationship between degrees of education and choices of media material'. This hypothesis has been explored by Roe (1983a) in relation to various media in a doctoral dissertation and considerable support was found for it especially in relation to adolescents' music preferences (see also Rosengren et al 1983). School achievement data were also related to video viewing in Roe (1981) with a number of interesting results.

A clear relationship was found between school achievement and reported propensity to view video. There was a strong tendency for low achievers to use video more than high achievers. The school achievement data were also related to the types of programmes which those who saw video reported viewing. The results indicated a very interesting differential viewing pattern according to school achievement. Violence, war films and horror films were all clearly associated with low achievement (see Roe 1981, pp 24-25).

Besides school achievement video viewing was also found to be related

to negative attitudes to staying on at school and to reported propensity to do homework. Wall and Cederblad (1982) reported that video viewers also played truant more often. If we take all these results together we see that video viewing of 'tough', violent and horrific video material is especially characteristic of underachieving negative to school pupils. We also know that boys tend to be especially involved with this type of material. In view of these findings a very likely hypothesis is that video viewing of this type of material is a new expression of the anti-school adolescent subcultural system. Other variants of this negative response to school include involvement with socially disapproved music subcultures, drug taking, delinquency, vandalism etc. Sociologically the mechanism is well known.

As Roe (1981, 1983b) has been at pains the emphasize, however, the fact that the respondents in this study had already been in school for years before video came (for the 9th graders, for example 7-8 years), and the fact that the low achievers already were low achievers long before video's advent means that we cannot apply the orthodox perspective that poor school achievement and negative attitudes to school came about as a result of video use. Roe (1983a) has already seriously called into question the validity of this position. In the case of video it is clear that school failure and negativity led to video viewing and preferences (through the mediation of the peer group) rather than the other way round. Roe (1983a) has also indicated that a similar causal mechanism operates with regard to preference for socially disapproved of types of music such as punk and hard rock.

Support for this position was also evidenced in the interviews. There was no evidence that video viewing caused greater truancy or the doing of less homework. Although some admitted viewing video while truanting they stated clearly that video was not the motivation for their truancy and that they would continue to truant even if video were not available. Truancy and general dislike of school were 'push' factors from the perceived meaninglessness of school not 'pull' factors from any supposed counter attractions.

It is clear from the above that the major problem here lies in the school. As Roe (1983a) has pointed out we have given our schools quite contradictory functions to fulfill. On the one hand they are supposed to educate, develop and facilitate individual talents and growth. On the other hand they are expected to judge and label children for life as 'successful' or 'failures'. We should not be surprised, then, when those who for many years have been rejected by the school in this way adopt values and behaviours in conflict with the ethos of the school and the general society it represents.

In this way schools help to promote the very values and behaviours which teachers themselves are then the first to complain of. Hitherto (because we have unquestioningly accepted the ideology of schooling) we have taken the correlations between school failure and media use as showing a causal mechanism from media use to low achievement. It is time we realized that rejection by the school leads to rejection of the school by those thus labelled and rejected (for a fuller discussion of this point, see Roe 1983a), and it is this phenomenon that we see most often when we look at adolescents' use of video violence. Perhaps it is time that teachers spent a little less time decrying the supposed harmful effects of the media and a little more time examining the harmful effects of their own practice.

4. THE EFFECTS OF VIDEO VIEWING

The problem of effects in relation to the media is at the same time one of the most frequently posed and one of the most difficult questions to which it is possible to provide an answer. "What effect does it have?" is often the first question asked of media researchers and social commentators by journalists, parents, politicians etc. Many are the answers given, the anecdotes propounded and the dire predictions which are given currency. Unfortunately no other question is fraught with so much lack of conceptual clarity or methodological difficulty than that of cause and effect in complex social processes and relationships. Simple cause and effects models almost invariably may be easily shown to be grossly over-simplified representations of a more complex social-psychological reality. If we are not to fall too deeply into the morass of exaggerated rhetoric therefore, it is necessary to be guarded in our assessments of effect and to base our arguments on empirical evidence rather than ideological assertion.

As Bauer and Bauer (1960) have pointed out, one of the basic premises of 'mass culture/mass media' critics is that content and effect may be equated. Thus a great many articles and conclusions concerning media effects are actually based on description and analysis of media contents. Nowhere was this more true than in the Swedish video debate. This debate was essentially about video contents and from there a more or less unproblematic relationship to effects was generally assumed. As Bauer and Bauer point out while such arguments are invariably persuasive and sophisticated, more to the point with content analysis is that,

> "We are told that there were X number of murders, and Y acts of violence shown on TV in a given period of time, or that heroes and heorines are depicted in such-and-such a fashion in a given sample of movies or magazine articles. Such findings serve well to alert us to the low artistic state of the media, and they may give us a good deal of insight into our culture and values. But it is precarious indeed to infer from this content its impact on its audience." (Ibid p 20)

In short nothing in descriptions of content is able to say anything about the psychological and social effects upon television audiences of numerous episodes of violence (Merton 1952). The now well documented variability of response which people have to communications implies that it is invalid merely to assume the equation of content and effect. For Bauer & Bauer it is essential,

> "to draw the distinction between imputation of effect, and the moral and aesthetic issues on which content analysis may be extremely pertinent ... The critics of the mass media would be on far firmer ground if they were to keep these two issues separate." (Ibid p 21)

We have in this report attempted, as far as it is possible, to keep the two issues of content and effects separate. A description of what our respondents saw when watching violent, horrific and pornographic video films has been presented in section 3. Here we shall take up the question of effects from the basis of the respondents own reported experiences and feelings.

In the interviews many adolescents expressed their feelings of revulsion and anxiety in connection with watching video. This was especially true of the girls who, as we have seen, tended to be more open and honest in this respect, less bound by the 'toughness' mores of the male adolescent peer group. Some of the boys did describe physical reactions, however, even if they were more reluctant to admit to being scared by what they saw. It was clear that some respondents had experienced direct physical symptoms as a result of video experiences,

- "I saw ... once how they blew up a head. Ugh! ... I thought I was going to die. I had a headache all night. It was terrible."

One group described a range of feelings,

I: "When you've seen a film ... Do you feel released afterwards?"
- "Yes, you feel a bit tired."
- "And heavy."
- "Yes, a bit tired, you're tired."
- "It depends what film it is ... If it's one of these really gruesome films then you sit there and you are usually sort of, you are sort of ...
- "Tense."
- "Yes, that's it."
- "You go to the toilet and feel ill."
- "You are completely, completely 'in' the film, then when it finishes you're tense."
- "Completely tense."
- "You daren't go down the stairs."

One girl in fact described the feeling of emotional release from tenseness as the specific motivation for watching such films,

- "You don't go to horror films to have fun! You go to get a release for your feelings. If you've been tense all day, and stressed, and you can't release it ..."
I: "You mean that you can live out your feelings in the film?"
- "Yes, I can if I am feeling stressed or tense, but if I'm feeling good I go to see a good film ..."

Many of the girls reported experiencing fear and anxiety of going home in the dark, of difficulties sleeping etc, though by no means all.

I: "Do you ever get really scared?"
- "Yes, if you've seen a horror film and you are walking home and see an old man dressed in dark clothes. Ooh! you jump in the air!"
I: "Is it because you start thinking about the film. What it would be like in reality?"
- "Yes. I don't know if we identify with it too much, and then, when you get home you can't sleep."
- "I forget it when I get home."
- "So do I."
- "It's never that bad that I can't sleep ..."

I: "What do you do when you get scared?"

- "I talk to myself and think about Donald Duck."
- "I dont't dare go home in the evenings when I've seen a horror film."

I: "What do you do, stay the night?"

- "No, you watch something else - if there is anything. Donald Duck or something like that, so you forget. Or you stay and talk to your friends about something else."
- "But when you go out - so, Oh! you run ... and it echoes between the buildings and sounds like someone is following you."
- "You always look in the dark corners."

I: "Do you dream about things you've seen on video?"

- "No".
- "Yes."

One girl described her fear of the dark and how watching video horror films exacerbated it,

- "But I'm so silly because I'm scared of the dark. So when I go to bed I'm shitscared. Then you put out the light and can't sleep - really horrible!... If I see a film I have to have the tape-recorder or the radio on all night ... For example I remember my friend and I; mother and father had gone to the summer cottage; so we were alone at home. We had been to my sisters and seen a real horror film. It was about some people from another planet or something. They came from another planet with lots of nasty sores on their face, and they made love and sucked blood and that. They cut peoples throats and so on. So we sat and watched this and then went home. Then, when it was time to sleep we decided to sleep in mum and dad's double bed ... I don't think I slept a wink all night. I lay there watching the whole time because I was scared someone would come. Now I switch on all the lights in the flat when I come home."

Much appears to depend on how realistic the scenes depicted in the films are. Many of the 'worst' films with the most extreme content were simply rejected as laughable or unrealistic,

- "It was just all these cannibals and, you know, these zombie films and werewolves and so on. You just laugh at it in the end."

Another group also stressed the realism dimension,

- "I couldn't believe in a film like that. I'd just think it was absurd, and I'd just laugh. Others ... whether they are good or bad, you can believe in. They are realistic - but a film like 'Cannibal Haulocaust' - it's not real savages ..."
- "I think that there are real savages. Deep in the jungle down there."
- (All) "Yes."
- "But not as many as they show - running around and chopping down and slurp! slurp!"

It became apparent in the subsequent discussion that the realism dimension was not a simple dichotomy but depended on the skill of the actors and director in establishing realism. Thus we may identify at least three different aspects, fantasy, realism and films which aspire to realism - and fail (we may perhaps add films which attempt to portray fantasy but which are perceived as realistic). It was clear from our interviews that films which distort and exaggerate reality too much and which are not obviously at the fantasy level are dismissed as 'unrealistic' and 'laughable' and their potential effects presumably diluted accordingly.

A further aspect of this question is that of pure incomprehension,

I: "Do you always understand the video films you see?"
- "There are some unbelievable films which you don't understand anything of, with strange beginnings and endings."

One aspect which was regarded as significant by several groups was that of desensitization to violence after one had viewed a number of such films. A number of respondents themselves saw this phenomenon as the most disturbing aspect of video violence,

- "We saw a lot of horror films and the first we saw were really grim, just a lot of bloody massacres the whole time. Then we just sat there and cringed. But in the end you get so used to it that you just sit there and watch while they cut the heads off each other."

Or as another girl expressed it,

- "You get almost immune. That's the worst of it actually. The first time you see a real horror film - then you think its really horrible - but then, well obviously it's still horrible - but you don't bother about it so much - not those horrible scenes anyway ... you don't react so much ... that's terrible really."
- "Yes, that's terrible."
- "Yes, some of the things you can sit and laugh at, even if that's not nice ... all the others sit there, and I daren't look - so they sit there and laugh at it, and you think, Oh! she's laughing at violence. God how can she do that."

None of the respondents saw themselves as being directly affected by violent scenes in terms of stimulating them to violent acts. They themselves often saw the reasons for such behavior as far more complex,

- "I mean there's no-one who runs out and knocks someone around because they've been watching a video film ... there has to be a helluva lot of other things causing it. If not then for Christ's sake ban it, but then they'd end up banning everying."

Younger children, however, could be in danger, one group thought,

I: "Do you think you've been influenced by violence?"
- "I don't know."
- "I believe children can be."
- "They watch and see someone doing this or that and maybe it's their idol doing it. Then they have to do like their idol."
- "But we're not like that. We don't do that."
- "But the little ones shouldn't watch films like that."

Not infrequently respondents were ironic concerning the effect of video films reflecting the public outcry against these films which was current and the time.

I: "What do you think about Swedish TV?"
- "Not enough slaughter! - No I'm only joking."

Or, on the social commentators,

- "Yeah, they've been so influenced because I've been influenced, that you've been influenced!"

I: "You don't eat people?"

- "No. Not very often anyway!"

4.1. The Reported Effects of Viewing Assessed

The interview data cited indicate that there are a number of separate identifiable reactions (we prefer this term to that of 'effects') to viewing extreme horrific/violent video contents. Do these give us serious cause for concern or are they more or less healthy or 'natural' reactions to the viewing of distasteful scenes?

Firstly, we may note the feelings of physical revulsion and symptoms (headaches, nausea etc). We may regret that young people are exposed to such content but we believe that such a reaction is a healthy one and give us cause for optimism. Perhaps it is when respondents cease to report such reactions to unpleasantness that we should begin to be really concerned.

Secondly, we have the reaction of 'release' from stress and tenseness. This may be allied to the traditional psychological theories of catharsis. Once again it may be regretted that adolescents are motivated to view grimly explicit violence in order to gain a release for their feelings, but perhaps the expression of this need says more about the inhibited culture in which we live than it does about video films. What are the sources of stress? Why are we unable to release stress and tension in our daily lives? One female respondent motivated video viewing thus, "when you are tense and stressed you cant't go out onto the lawn and scream to get rid of it ...", why not, is the question one is forced to ask of our culture? Perhaps a society which builds up such levels of emotional frustration in its members requires outlet channels like video. In any event it is the society that appears to be the causal agent, not video.

Thirdly, we may identify fear and anxiety, both of which a number of groups reported significant incidence of. Here we should remind ourselves of Roe's (1983b) caution on video violence,

> "This is unsavoury stuff, yet is it as a type of content actually new in the history of popular culture? It is important to see such content in its historical context, as a development. Video did not invent the bloodthirsty, nor did it invent pornography. We should be reminded of the 19th century Gothic novel and the fact that both

photography and home movies were first exploited commercially for pornography. It can be argued that moving colour close up pictures exaggerate the impact and effect that such material can have on the viewer but we should not be carried away in our concern over video to the extent of imagining that it is anything new in these respects."

In respect of childish and adolescent fears and anxieties we should remember the potency that images of the devil, bogey-men of various descriptions, wicked witches and supernatural spectres have always had in popular folk-lore. That pubescent boys and girls have been full of anxieties of this kind is nothing new. The psychology of adolescence as a life stage tells us that it is a period of intense insecurities and anxieties in any event. This is not to attempt to defend video but to set the phenomenon in some kind of historical and cultural context, for only then may it be adequately explained and understood. No doubt an exceptionally heavy diet of anxiety-provoking material may be an important factor in cultivating a neurotic condition but it is unlikely that media alone, in a sound socio-cultural context, could do so (it is of course quite possible that media could be a contributory part of such a development). Fear and anxiety are existential qualities pertaining to the human condition, they are not a product of video viewing.

Fourthly, we may identify de-sensitization. This we believe is potentially the most disquieting 'reaction' which we have identified amongst our respondents. It was also the one cited as most disconcerning by the respondents themselves. Does a heavy diet of violence actually de-sensitize one to real violence? The answer to this question must be answered by psychologists on the basis of reasonably long term research. In all probability it once more depends on the type of violence. Fantasy violence is unlikely to de-sensitize us to realistic violence, neither perhaps is unrealistic violence of the type described by some respondents above. However some films clearly did achieve a level of realistic violence which made the viewing of them a direct experience which at first shocked and repulsed and which then came to be accepted as rather passé. If so, video viewers may be becoming increasingly callous with regard to violence in their lives.

We should add, finally, that we found no evidence of direct imitation amongst the respondents. Furthermore there was no evidence of stimulation to sexual acts or perversions as a result of viewing pornography. On the

contrary we were surprised by the level of sexual conservatism expressed by the groups. The licence of screened pornography was generally regarded as dull, monotonous and as titillation for adults. Likewise we found little evidence of 'associational' behavior in terms of e g drinking, which some sections of the debate have brought forward. Few drank while viewing and most if they consumed anything at all consumed crisps and sweets. In the same vein we found very little evidence that video viewing was a cause of truancy from school. While some did indeed watch video while truanting this was more a case of choosing an available alternative activity to pass the time. Those who truanted reported that they had truanted before they had had access to video and would continue to truant even if video were not available. As Roe (1983b) has pointed out truancy is a 'push' phenomenon from the school rather than a 'pull' phenomenon from the lure of video (or anything else). One played truant because of the boredom and meaningless of certain lessons or of school in general.

With the exception of the possible consequences of de-sensitization we believe that assertions of effect with regard to video viewing should be tempered by the evidence available. Again we should caution that content and effect be clearly demarcated. Indeed to equate them is in many ways to assert the existence of an uncritical, 'idiot', audience which is unable to discriminate between different types of content. Some critics of mass society and the mass media may indeed hold this view. However, we found no evidence for this position amongst our respondents and hold with the findings of Bauer & Bauer (1960) that such a view is an ideological assertion which finds little support in empirical research results. As cultural criticism such a view perhaps has some validity, however, as Bauer & Bauer state,

> "One could wish that the theorists of mass society had not so confused social analysis and cultural criticism (ibid p 66)."

5. ADOLESCENTS, VIDEO AND POPULAR CULTURE

> "The longest and perhaps most important cultural struggle has pitted the educated practitioners of high culture against most of the rest of society, rich and poor, which prefers the mass or popular culture provided by the mass media and the consumer goods industries." (Gans 1974, p 3)

Roe (1983b) has already pointed out the continuities of video use as a development of popular culture; as well as the continuities of cul-

tural criticism against these activities of the 'priests of culture religious and secular'. If the mass culture critique were limited purely to matters of taste the issue would probably rarely transcend the level of aesthetic debate. However, as Gans points out, intellectually the struggle has actually been one-sided,

> "The advocates of high culture criticize popular culture as a mass culture which has harmful effects on both individuals consuming it and on society as a whole, while the users of popular culture ignore this critique, reject high culture, and continue to patronize the sellers of media fare". (ibid p 3)

Furthermore, as Gans also notes, in reality the critique is significant because it is concerned with far more than media fare,

> "It is really about the nature of the good life, and thus about the nature of life in general ... It is also about which culture and whose culture should dominate in society ... As such, the mass culture critique is an attack by one element in society against another: by the cultured against the uncultured, the educated against the uneducated, the sophisticated against the unsophisticated, the more affluent against the less affluent, and the cultural experts against the laity. In each case, the former criticize the latter for not living up to their own standard of the good life." (ibid pp 3-4)

The mass culture critique now has a long history of attacks upon successive forms of leisure activities and media. Radio, jazz, cinema, comics, television and rock music have all in their time drawn upon themselves the disapprobation of the mass culture critics. In the case of video in Sweden, however, we witnessed a particularly savage, at times near hysterical, attack from these critical quarters to the extent that a veritable 'moral panic' can be said to have occurred in the first years of the 80's (see Roe 1984). That a generally acknowledged 'problem' existed (in the form of extremely, and explicitly, violent video films being viewed by some adolescents) cannot, of course, be denied. Before proceeding, and to make the point quite clear, the authors would like to record their own opinion as to the content of these films. Such films of this type as we have seen portray a level and type of violence which we believe would revolt any civilized person. Consequently we believe that a discussion of the problem and the introduction of counteractive measures was required. What we objected to, however, was the grossly exaggerated tone of the video debate and the fact that what the critics were guilty of was a complete lack of proportion

in their assertions of both the extent and the effects of the problem. In addition what many of them were at pains to display (and this is, as Gans has shown, often the case) was not their concern with adolescent uses of video but their own cultural superiority. In the overwhelming majority of cases contributions to the video debate, especially in the press, presented very little in the way of concrete evidence for the supposed harmful effects of video use. Mostly the assertion of effects was based upon inference, anecdote and prediction (see Roe 1984). We are therefore forced to share the conclusions of Gans that,

> "A sizable difference exists between the media effects postulated by the critics of mass culture and those discovered by empirical research. As a result it would appear that the critics are making unwarranted inferences about the extent, intensity, and harmfulness of media effects; because they dislike media content and popular culture generally, they come to it with the aesthetic standards of high culture and are shocked by what they see, hear and read. Since they assume that the media audience shares - or ought to share - their standards, they naturally project their own reactions on the audience." (ibid p 42)

Consequently, continues Gans,

> "the critique is largely a statement of aesthetic dissatisfaction with popular culture content, justified by an incorrect estimate of negative effects and based on a false conception of the uses and functions of popular culture ... In short, that critique is partly an ideology of defense, constructed to protect the cultural and political privileges of high culture." (ibid, pp 51, 63)

Often such critics infer the values and behaviour of users from the content of the media used. This is an invalid procedure, at least until we know how and why users choose what they do from the media. As Gans has noted we cannot unproblematically assume that users necessarily use what they do because it expressed their values. It may be simply that they don't particularly like anything else that is offered to them and that they are choosing something because it is the lesser of two evils. As we saw in the preceding sections there is a large element of this involved in adolescents' uses of video. TV is strongly disliked, the cinema is too expensive and the range of leisure activities available is restricted.

A further problem with the critical hypotheses about mass communications is, as McQuail (1969) has pointed out, the fact that they lack the essential attribute of falsifiability, and the criticism of the effects of

mass culture tends to be tautological because observations are selectively interpreted to 'prove' basic pre-suppositions (see McQuail, p 34).

It is also well to remember that during the course of the video debate only a relatively small minority of adolescents were actually involved in 'cause for concern' video contents. In addition as we have seen from the interviews presented in this report many of these were in fact highly critical with regard to these contents. Over time video users have matured, and according to their own reports, left such films behind. In this they have been helped by the quickly expanding diversification of the video hire market which has meant that much more choice is available to them. The evidence seems to suggest therefore that the uses and effects (if any) of video violence are transitory in the vast majority of cases. In this respect therefore, the burden of proof would appear to lie with the critics of popular culture (see also McQuail 1969 p 35). Only with such proof can the asserted superiority and universality of high culture be maintained. If not, then we hold with Gans that,

> "The critics of mass culture ... have transplanted their own private evaluation into a public policy position, which not only ignores other people's private evaluations but seeks to eliminate them altogether. The critics demand that everyone should live by their standards and embrace high culture, but this demand is not justified in a democratic and pluralistic society." (ibid p 121)

If we wish to combat the type of video contents used by some adolescents we are not going to do so by assertions of cultural superiority. Instead we need to attack the problem at its source, in the lack of resources and meaningful leisure opportunities provided for large groups of adolescents. This could be approached by alternative programming of media channels to address smaller, specific audiences like, for example, male working class adolescents. The new technology of communications (including video as well as cable and pay-TV) now make this kind of programming a possibility. This suggestion is of course only likely to be grist to the mill of high culture critics who denounce all electronic media as more or less equally damaging. We are, however, dealing with the real world of adolescents and not the idealized would-be world of high culture. We need also to examine the praxis of a schooling system which, by its labelling and certification functions rejects a significant proportion of each successive cohort of school pupils thereby laying the ground for anti-social sub-cultures and activities to re-appear in each of those cohorts. We need further

to examine the basic structure of a society which induced such levels of stress and emotional frustration in some of its members that they feel the need for release through the viewing of explicit violence. And, finally, we need to maintain some sense of proportion in our selection of which social issues are worthy of so much of our attention. As Gans has remarked,

> "Interestingly enough some critics who wish to banish the media and popular culture for their harmfulness seem much less interested in banning other phenomena which are actually much more harmful." (ibid p 40)

While the media (like most other social phenomena) can have negative effects these should be balanced in our discussions against such issues as nuclear weaponry, industrial pollution, racism and traffic accidents. The last named, to take one example, is responsible for the death and serious injury of tens of thousands of people every year in Europe, yet private transportation has never been subjected to the type of sustained, widespread and violent critique which critics of popular culture level at the media. Even if we accept that video violence has been the cause of isolated incidents of violence, it is hardly in the same league as motor transport's annual carnage. Two wrongs, of course, do not make a right but we do need to maintain some sense of proportion when seeking the redress of social ills. Now that the tide of feeling has ebbed somewhat, it is to be hoped that a more reasoned, and balanced, discussion of the issues involved in adolescents' video viewing will be forthcoming from all of those concerned.

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APPENDIX 1

Forskningsprogrammet Mediapanel

Lund i oktober 1982

Hej!

För ett par år sedan var du med och fyllde i ett frågeformulär som handlade om barn och massmedia. Tack för din medverkan. Resultaten kommer snart att publiceras. Denna undersökning var en del av ett större projekt, i vilket vi ställer frågor till samma personer vid ett eller två tillfällen, en så kallad panelundersökning.

På senare tid har man diskuterat massmedia-användning livligt. Förra gången du fyllde i formuläret, besvarade du frågor angående TV, bio, video etc. Nu skulle vi gärna vilja veta lite mer. Hur ofta ser man på dessa medier, varför gör man det, vad ser man på? etc. Har du lust att träffa oss och prata lite kring dessa frågor skulle det vara mycket värdefullt och intressant.

Vi garanterar din anonymitet. Ingen som känrer dig kommer någonsin att se vad du har svarat.

Vi kommer att ringa upp dig så vi kan prata vid lite närmare och kanske bestämma en tid. Vill du fråga någonting så står vi gärna till tjänst.

Det skulle vara fint om du har lust att ställa upp.
Tack på förhand!

Med vänlig hälsning

Karin Salomonsson Keith Roe

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APPENDIX 2

Forskningsprogrammet Mediapanel

Lund i oktober 1982

Till målsman

För ett par år sedan var Ni och Ert barn med i en undersökning kring barn och massmedia som genomfördes i Växjö. Denna undersökning var en del av ett större projekt, i vilket vi ställer frågor till samma personer vid ett eller två tillfällen, en så kallad panelundersökning. Tack för Er medverkan. Resultaten kommer snart att publiceras.

På senare tid har massmediaanvändningen av ungdomar debatterats flitigt. Förra gången vi var i kontakt med Ert barn, ställde vi ett antal frågor kring massmediaanvändning. Vi skulle nu gärna vilja följa upp de frågeställningarna med ett antal intervjuer. Om Ert barn är intresserat hoppas vi att Ni inte har något emot en sådan intervju.

Ämnet för undersökningen är viktigt. Vi vet att barn i Sverige lägger ned mycket tid på massmedier, t ex TV, radio, video, bio. Men vi vet väldigt lite vad detta för med sig. Vi tror att vår stora undersökning - en av de största i sitt slag i världen - skall ge oss möjlighet att besvara en del av de frågor som man ännu inte vet svaret på. Ert barns hjälp betyder mycket här.

Vi garanterar Ert barns anonymitet. Ingen som känner Ert barn kommer någonsin att se vad han/hon har svarat.
Vi kommer att ringa upp Ert barn och avtala en tid.
Vill Ni fråga någonting, står vi gärna till tjänst.
Tack på förhand!

Med bästa hälsningar

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APPENDIX 3

Skolstyrelsen
Växjö Kommun

Undertecknad är ledare för Forskningsprogrammet Mediapanel, som under de senaste åren företagit en omfattande massmedieundersökning vid skolorna i Växjö.

Inom programmet har vi nu fått tillfälle att göra en kompletterande undersökning kring skolungdomars video-vanor, ett nog så viktigt och aktuellt ämne. För detta behöver vi i gruppintervjuer nå ca 50 elever i nuvarande högstadiet. Intervjuerna är tänkta att företas i samtalsgrupper om fem vid samtliga högstadieskolor, där vi tidigare varit och kan ta 1-2 lektionstimmar vardera.

Undertecknad anhåller härmed om att vi som vanligt erhåller hjälp att nå eleverna i fråga och att vi får hjälp med en mindre lokal vid de aktuella skolorna, där intervjuerna kan göras.

Elevernas föräldrar har informerats om undersökningen. Vi kommer att ta kontakt med respektive studierektor.

Växjö den 20 oktober 1982

Sven Windahl

Sven Windahl, docent och forskningsledare

Skolstyrelsen 1982-10-29

Ärendet har behandlats vid förhandlingar med lärarorganisationerna 1982-10-27 och tillstyrkts. Skolstyrelsen har inga invändningar och medger framställningen.

På skolstyrelsens vägnar
Bo Holmberg

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